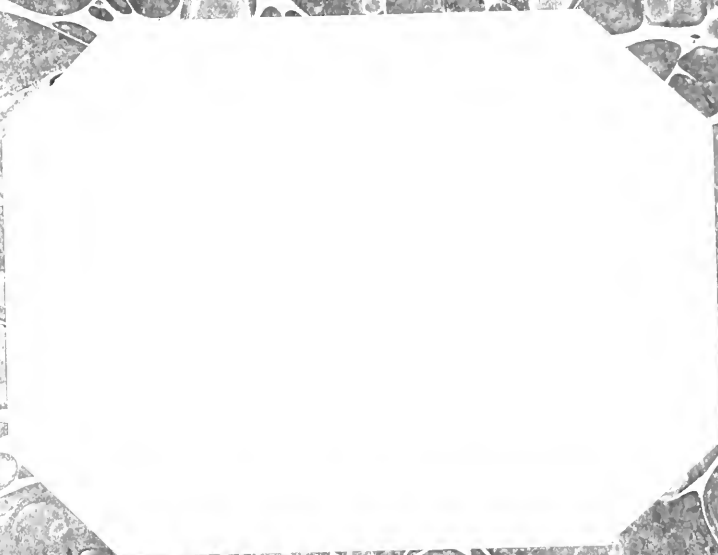


E

449

-R492





Class E449<sup>1</sup>

Book R492





22  
22  
50  
15

# SLAVERY AND THE CHURCH.

---

TWO LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO REV. N. L. RICE, D. D.,

IN REPLY TO HIS LETTERS TO THE CONGREGATIONAL DEPUTATION,  
ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.

ALSO A

LETTER TO REV. NEHEMIAH ADAMS, D. D.,

IN ANSWER TO THE "SOUTH SIDE VIEW OF SLAVERY."

BY

SMECTYMNUS.

---

BOSTON:  
CROCKER AND BREWSTER.

1856.

1911

1912

1852.28/11

## P R E F A C E .



AT the last meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, (Old School,) several Congregational Associations were represented by their delegates. Under instructions from these bodies, they introduced the subject of Slavery, and expressed their fears that this branch of the church was remiss in her duty in this matter; and in the way of friendly remonstrance, they presented the views of the Congregational churches, as opposed to the silence and inaction of the General Assembly. Rev. Dr. Rice, of St. Louis, was Moderator of the Assembly. The delegates were kindly received, but this part of their mission found little favor with the Southern churches. Dr. Rice subsequently addressed ten Letters to the deputation on the subject of slavery, in which there is an odd mixture of argument, scolding and sarcasm, with many marks of kindness, which, together with his own perplexities and inconsistencies, give us a true picture of the extremities to which Southern ministers are driven in regard to this subject. When they have made up their minds that *slavery is wrong*, they will learn how to deal with it, but till then they must continue to be like "waves of the sea, driven of the winds and tossed."

Dr. Rice's letters indicate a vigorous and gifted mind, and he endeavors to treat the subject with candor and kindness,

yet some parts of his letters, even in these points, are really objectionable. He has not quite so much *meekness* in receiving rebuke, as he has *power* and *energy* in administering it, but on the whole, we have seen nothing from a Southern pen, on this subject, which has so little that is offensive in language to Northern minds.

The letter to Dr. Adams is in reply to his "South side view of Slavery," a book which ought never to have been written. It is enough for Southern ministers to apologise for and defend the system of slavery, but it is an intense grief to the Christian heart, when an able and respected minister enters the field in defence of a cause, so utterly repugnant, not only to the feelings of most who bear the christian name, but to the great majority of the non-professing world. Dr. Adams has outstripped Dr. Rice, in his zeal to help the slaveholder, and both these gentlemen are laboring under the strange illusion, that the relation of master and slave is not sinful—an illusion which would quickly be dispelled, if they and their families were delivered over to the absolute authority and disposal of others, who might or might not abuse their power. A brief experience of the blessings of slavery in a cotton-field, would prove a most instructive and convincing argument, on this point.

The day of free and full discussion of this subject has now come. We must approach each other with kindness, but yet with firmness and decision. If the position that slavery is not sinful should be established in the world, we think there are none who would mourn over it more than these justly esteemed ministers—let this sentiment pervade the public mind and work out its necessary results, and these gentlemen would be among the first to condemn that relation, which, strangely enough, they now sanction and defend.



## LETTERS TO REV. N. L. RICE, D. D.

---

### FIRST LETTER.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—

It has happened to you, as to other writers for the public, that your "Letters on Slavery" have fallen under the eye of critics, who, it may be, are not remarkable for candor, and perhaps are more anxious to expose its defects, than to imitate the kind and christian spirit, which, in the main, you have manifested. But if you have done anything to benefit the slave, or to correct the notions of anti-slavery men, a close analysis of your arguments will not lessen their value, or impair their usefulness. If, on the other hand, 't shall appear that you have made important mistakes and omissions, and especially, if I am able to shew that your positions are not only at variance with the gospel of Christ, but opposed to those innate notions of equity which are common to all men, I hope you will not impute these views to any unreasonable prejudice, or any desire to do injustice to slave-holders.

I have not avowed my name, but I have assumed one,\* whose mystic letters are remembered with deep interest by every reader of Puritan history, not that I would compare anything I can do, to those noble monuments of Puritan talent, and the sorely tasked ingenuity, which conveyed its

\* The word "Smectymnuus" was composed of the initials of the names of five Puritan Divines, who wrote a celebrated treatise in favor of their principles, under this title, in a period of persecution, and the authors were unknown for many years. Subsequently it appeared that their names were as follows: Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Neweomen, and William Spurstow.

lessons of wisdom and its demands for civil and religious freedom, under this politic enigma; but haply I may wish to visit the South, as I have formerly done, and if my work and my name precede me, I shall not be likely to share so largely in Southern hospitality as my friend Dr. Adams did, whose "South side view" was so happily attempered to Southern optics, for your "peculiar institution" has left little room for the outflow of charity towards an abolitionist. Yet I hope again to visit the South, and would to God I might see it overspread, like my own New England, with churches, villages and schools, instead of the negro cabin, the forced labor, and the dull monotony of a land under the curse of slavery.

I have avowed myself an Abolitionist. Yes, Sir, however unpopular the name, I am not only willing to bear it, but to count it all honor to be thus designated. It is a name which in the Southern States is connected with all that is fanatical and hateful; in England and Scotland, yea in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, it is associated with all that is honorable and praise worthy, and the friend of slavery is deemed false to his innate convictions, false to humanity and to God.

I am, moreover, a Presbyterian of the Old School. From my childhood, I have been instructed in the doctrines of this branch of the church. I love her faith, her polity, her institutions, and her worship. I have sat under her shadow with great delight, and have drank from her living fountains the waters of life and salvation. God grant that every cloud which eclipses her glory may pass away, and that she may defend the liberties of others, as nobly, as faithfully and successfully, as she has battled for her own.

You, dear Sir, are a minister of Christ; you have been "anointed to preach good tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them who are bound," and to you, in common with others, belongs that solemn and awful admonition, "Son of man, I have set thee a watchman to the house of Israel, therefore thou shalt hear the word from my mouth, and warn them from me. If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I re-

quire at thine hand." It is in the light of the Holy Scriptures, that I now invite you to contemplate a widely different view of christian obligation, from the one you have presented to the world. It is not limited to the narrow line of selfish or sectional observation, but its broad and comprehensive outline is sketched by the pen of inspiration in those heaven-breathing words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

You are unwilling to discuss the right or wrong of slavery in the abstract, but you may not thus dismiss this all important point. Much of what you say has no value until this previous question is settled. The mode of treating a subject depends greatly upon its moral character, and much of your reasoning, which is very well as applied to a *physical evil*, is totally out of place, when applied to a *moral wrong*. Calamity and crime are widely different things. You have no hesitation in giving to fraud and injustice their proper names and their just application, as they exist in society at large, but it seems these moral features must vanish, when slavery is discussed,—so that while *single exercises* of injustice may be condemned, a *system of injustice* may be vindicated; that which is wrong upon a limited scale, becomes right, when it stands forth in a menacing aspect and gigantic proportions. This is the false and hateful logic of slavery; it takes advantage of its own wrong, and claims immunity, because its usurpations have risen to such degrees of influence, that they cannot safely be attacked. You tell us we have treated the subject unwisely, because we call it a sin and the slaveholder a sinner, but we have not so learned the Scriptures. Fraud and injustice are always sins, modified by no climate or color, and are subjects of just rebuke, whether found in the stealing of money or the robbery of human rights. If expediency may sometimes restrain the utterance of deserved rebuke, it will not permit us to call "evil good and good evil." Was Nathan harsh or unwise, when he said to David, "Thou art the man?" Not so, nor did David so understand it. The royal penitent was deeply humbled, and confessed his sin in the deepest contrition and self-abhorrence. Was Elijah unwise when he uttered the maledictions of heaven upon the spoiler

and murderer of Naboth? In your ministry of warning and mercy to man, you have learned to distinguish between the sin and the sinner, unsparingly denouncing the one, and pitying, with divine compassion the other. So would we deal with slaveholders, and if the language of rebuke is inconsistent with christian love, then the stern demands of religion must cease to be urged, and the thunders of Sinai may slumber in the cloud that covered the mount.

But you will ask me, is slavery a sin *per se*, and under this subterfuge you would veil the enormity of its transgressions. I answer fearlessly, it is a sin, as murder is sin, as theft is sin, as injustice is sin. Cases there may be where slaveholders are only *nominally* guilty. The same is true of many acts, which in view of human law are called murder and theft. But we do not ask the question whether murder or theft are sins *per se*. A man may be a nominal slaveholder from necessity, and yet be a pious and benevolent man. A murderer in the judgment of man, may be acquitted at the bar of God. In both these cases, a false judgment exists. There is neither slave-holding nor murder in either case. But when a man kills another from *malice*, it is murder; when a man holds slaves for *gain*, it is injustice and fraud. Here is the true distinction. Any man who holds slaves for a *benevolent end*, who remunerates their labor, and is only prevented from manumitting them by circumstances which he cannot control, is involved in *misfortune*, but not in *guilt*; but he who holds slaves for his *own gain*, to increase his wealth, or to promote his own selfish ends, is as truly guilty of injustice and fraud, as if he were a common thief, and he is all the more guilty, because he robs the slave of rights far more precious than gold. A *single act* of robbery dooms a thief to the State-prison; a *system* of robbery is justified and defended and is no bar to honor and respectability in the world. Do you, Sir, believe these to be the ethics of the Bible—that blessed book which assures us that without love and justice to man, there can be no evidence of favor with God? If you will not call slavery a sin, to be consistent, you must cease to warn men of their sins, and adopt the

Antinomian theory, that the promises of the gospel are the only themes becoming a gospel minister.

When, therefore, you rebuke us because we treat slavery as a *crime*, and not merely a *calamity*; because we cannot view it in the same category of evils as famine, or earthquake, or pestilence, but as a series of moral acts, for which man is justly accountable, we may well complain of unfairness. Your reasoning proceeds mainly on the assumption that slavery is an unavoidable evil, and you ask of us to treat the matter very much as you would expect us to behave, if one of your cities was desolated by pestilence or fire.

But no, dear Sir, in the vital language of Lord Brougham, "we must dispel from your minds the wild and guilty fantasy, that man can hold property in his fellow-man." We must bring the system of slavery to a law, written on the consciences of men not less distinctly than in the word of God, even that law of uprightness and integrity which renders to all men their due. We must not deal with the voluntary slaveholder, as if he were a *helpless cripple*, but as a *wilful criminal*. If he pretends that he has been educated in different views of slavery and does not see its injustice as we do, we must tell him that ignorance is a crime, where the means of knowledge are at hand, and that this plea proves far too much; it would equally justify the Hindoo suttee, the Catholic auto de fe, and all the atrocities which bigotry and mental blindness can inflict. If when we denounce the sin of slavery, the slaveholder is roused to madness because his craft is in danger, shall we therefore cease our crusade against his sin? As well might you blame the Apostles for preaching the gospel at Ephesus, because the whole city was thrown into commotion by it. I suppose Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen had as good an opinion of their business, as slave owners can by any possibility entertain of theirs.

If you could dispel from the minds of your readers the conviction that slavery is sinful; if you could satisfy them that it is merely an evil, and not a crime, then your reasoning would be in point, and the anti-slavery men of the north would think they had greatly erred; but you are dealing with

men who cannot thus be deluded, and your rebukes which otherwise would be reasonable and just, are as powerless as the arrow of Priam on the shield of Achilles. To the minds of those who believe slavery to be sinful you confound all moral distinctions. The strength of your mental delusion astonishes us. We are amazed that you do not recoil from the dreadful results to which you are forced. We wonder that you can preach a gospel of righteousness, and yet defend a system which is fruitful of all unrighteousness; I say defend it, for it will yet be seen that notwithstanding you refuse to pronounce it right or wrong, you actually attempt to justify it from the Scriptures.

But you ask us to view the question of slavery in its Providential aspect. Your request is reasonable, but I apprehend it will add nothing to your cause. All the dealings of Providence are fit subjects of notice to the Christian, but the *revealed will* of God, and not his *providential dealings*, is the rule of our duty. Was not the bondage of Israel, an appointment of God? But the duties required from Pharaoh and enjoined upon Moses; recognized the sinful agencies by which this bondage was perpetuated. God intended to overrule it all for the display of his own glory, but was not every step, in this process of deliverance, conducted by responsible agents? God did not the less punish Pharaoh for the sin of slavery, or excuse Moses from the dangerous duty of confronting the Egyptian king. The truth is, the providences of God must be interpreted by his word. If they seem to intimate a rule of duty opposed to his word, all such intimations are to be rejected. The pretensions of Faith and Providence must be tried by an infallible standard, or they will prove blind and treacherous guides. The fact that God has permitted slavery, is no excuse for the slaveholder, and may not silence the rebukes he deserves. If God design good to the African race by means of slavery, he will accomplish it by his *overruling*, but not by his *approving* providence. He may design a glorious deliverance for Africa by means of slavery, and yet its agents and friends will not fail to find their punishment, even as Pharaoh did, though it be in the depths of

the Red Sea. "The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church," but they who kindled the fires of persecution have gone to a just and awful retribution.

But, in my apprehension, the Providence of God has far different teachings on this momentous subject. I am no interpreter of the divine mysteries, and many who have sought to unravel them, have fallen into fanaticism and delusion; but it is no fanaticism to say, we are a nation of sinners—and it is only within a limited circle, that slavery is not pronounced a sin of the most atrocious and heaven-daring character. We may therefore expect that for our national sins, the deserved judgments of heaven will not long be delayed. I cannot but fear that this sin of slavery, approved and justified by so many national acts, is to prove such a punishment of our public offences, as shall be a wonder to the world. Why may not America, for this and its other gigantic iniquities, aggravated by its profession of the gospel, find the grave of its institutions and the ruin of its liberties, both civil and religious, in the fiery gulf, which slavery is opening before us. I tremble for my country, said Jefferson, and he was only a believer in natural religion—"I tremble for my country when I remember that God is just."

But there is still another view of the Providence of God touching this matter. It is the deep conviction of numbers among us, that the American Church has not fulfilled its mission in the matter of slavery. We firmly believe that the Christian Church has had a work to do, which she has shamefully neglected. In great mercy and with manifest approbation, her labors have been employed in many departments of religion, but she has refused to enter this field of labor. God does not need her services; in his awful sovereignty he may and does employ the wrath of man to praise him. If his church, redeemed by atoning blood, will not hear the cry of the oppressed, he will raise up and employ other agencies. Political events are in his hands; he may desolate our land with blood; or peace may reign among us, and he may employ the infidelity of Parker, the violence of Garrison, and the fury of fanatical reformers, to do that work

which his own people refuse to perform—nay, he may crush the church under the weight of its own sins, and from its ruins, he may build another and more beautiful temple, in which the sons of departed prophets shall “preach righteousness in the great congregation.”

Have you not, dear Sir, gazed in wonder and awe at the forces which God employs in his moral kingdom? When Israel rebelled, he sent prophets among them; when their message was rejected, he ravaged their cities with pestilence and famine; and when they still refused to obey, he sent the Assyrian host and the bands of the Chaldeans, to accomplish the very ends for which his people refused to labor; and when Israel was ruined by her persistent rebellion, he punished the nations who had humbled her, and poured out his fury upon the heathen, who in their own wickedness had accomplished his will. “Clouds and darkness are round about him, but justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”

It has been to me, a most affecting illustration of his Providence, that God has employed the talents of infidel writers, from the deistical Jefferson, to the bold infidelity of Theodore Parker, in the work of emancipation, and that too with signal success. Jehu executed God’s judgments upon the house of Ahab, and he had his temporal reward, but he took no heed to walk in the ways of God. Garrison and his associates are sending a cry through the land, which ought to have swelled from the hill tops of our Zion, and they are fulfilling the divine purposes, by doing the work of the church, while, at the same time, they scourge and deride that church, whose members go up to her Sabbaths, her solemn feasts and her holy places of communion, with garments defiled with blood. I say it with unspeakable grief, but with the most solemn conviction of its truth, that the attitude of the American church, in regard to slavery, has thrown a stumbling-block in the way, over which numbers have plunged into hopeless infidelity. “It must be that offences come, but woe, woe to him, by whom the offence cometh.”



But you tell us that multitudes of slaves have been converted, and that abolitionists have no share in this good work. We admit the fact, and we rejoice that the bitter cup of slavery has been, in some degree, neutralized by the healing waters of the gospel. But God deals with men as he pleases. Thousands have been converted by instrumentalities, which God has overruled for this benevolent end. The gospel may be a savor of life unto life to the poor, oppressed hearer, while it is a savor of death unto death to the preacher. It has ever been the purpose of God to honor his gospel. Because the labors of Mr. Finney have been the means of conversion to many, you would not justify the extravagances and fanaticism of this remarkable man. No more, because the gospel has been preached to slaves by slave-holding ministers, would you expect that its truths would have no effect on the conscience. The fact that God blesses the preaching, is no proof that he approves the character of the preacher. But waiving this, I have no wish to deny that much good has been effected by the preaching of the gospel among slaves; it is matter of thankfulness and rejoicing, and every true Christian will bless God for it. Nor have I the least doubt, that many who have not yet discovered the sin of slavery are sincerely good men, and preach among the slaves with earnest desires for their salvation, and God approves and blesses their labors; but it is true, that anti-slavery ministers have no direct agency in this work. They are not permitted to stand on Southern ground and proclaim the gospel of liberty to the captive; human statutes are too slow for this mortal offence; they are driven by mob law from these scenes of christian labor, if haply they escape with their lives. Methodism may go among you, in its wildest fanaticism, if it will tolerate slavery; but the solemn demands of the gospel, its direct enforcements of justice and equity, cannot for a moment be endured.

It is a fact beyond dispute, that slavery has given an *Anti-nomian* character to the Southern church. I appeal to you, Sir, and ask, are not the *purposes* of God, in regard to the children of Ham, used as a plea for the defence of slavery?

Is not the judicial curse pronounced upon Canaan, often appealed to in justification of the system? Does not the divine *purpose* thus become a rule of duty? This perversion, if carried out in other views of God's designs as they respect the salvation of men, would paralyse christian effort, and fill the land with antinomian fatalism and delusion.

Your next point relates to the Colonization Society. I consider this Society as standing out of the line of argument in this discussion. It was never instituted for the removal of slavery; I believe it never made any such pretensions. It is my firm belief that its design was benevolent and praiseworthy. I have willingly contributed to its funds, and in common with the great majority of Northern Christians have rejoiced in its success. But as a measure looking to the abolition of slavery, it has never been esteemed of much value, for the moment this was understood to be its design, it would be abandoned and denounced by the South—and it is well known that many planters at the South, who are professing Christians, are opposed to it; but still it has accomplished much good, more probably than many of its original friends desired. It has demonstrated the capacity of the African for self-government; it has founded a prosperous and peaceful colony, and given to it Christian institutions; it has exerted a kind and beneficent influence, and we have no sympathy with those who denounce it. But it cannot demolish the strong entrenchments of slavery. The moment it eneroaches upon your "peculiar institution," the South will hang out the signal for its utter extinction. But there is no such fear. Colonization is too weak to grapple with such a monster; but she displays the prosperity of free Liberia, in striking contrast with the blighted prospects and withering industry of the slave-ridden South.

We come now to consider your view of slavery, as apart from its providential aspects it involves great *moral questions*. Among these you enumerate the questions:—Is it the duty of masters at once to manumit their slaves? If so, what is to be done with them, if the laws forbid manumission? Again, what is to be done with those who have intermarried

with slaves belonging to other men? And out of these "other difficult and complicated questions arise, which require patient and thorough examination." You do not state these questions with any view to answer them, but as a reason why the subject should be kindly met and carefully considered. And the remainder of your second letter is mostly occupied in stating the inconsistencies of the North, in pleading the bad example of some of her best men in the darker ages of slavery, and in rebukes not altogether kind and conciliatory, of the Northern way of presenting this subject.

It is readily admitted that the questions you propose are exceedingly difficult of solution, and they demand of us all that you claim in the way of patience and kindness; but I have yet to learn that our Southern friends are willing to ask these questions, or consider them at all, with any view to emancipation. Individuals, indeed, have in many cases manumitted their slaves, and have thus given a practical reply to these interrogatories. They have found out a way to liberate the captive, and have seen the solution of these questions to be far less difficult than was apprehended. When the South gets so far as to be willing to consider the subject, and take up its complex and difficult character, they will be entitled to the largest charity and sympathy of the North; but till they manifest some desire to know their duty, it is useless to argue the point. One thing is certain, when Southern Christians feel that slavery is wrong, and when their consciences are deeply disquieted about it, they will ask in humble sincerity, Lord what wilt thou have me to do? And they need not doubt that the path of duty will be made plain. But so long as they maintain that slavery is right, and attempt to justify it from the Bible, I think they are not entitled to argue from the difficulty of their position. It is absolutely certain that slaveholders can cease to be holders of slaves for *gain*; whenever they choose, they can abandon the wages of unrighteousness; they can be nominal slaveholders, paying their servants and doing that which is just and equal. Shew me such a slave-owner as this, and I honor him, more than I honor an abolitionist who never held slaves. He hath done what he

could, and will be accepted of God. But alas! such examples are rare indeed, and you, Sir, may ask these questions with a much better grace, when you can shew me that professedly Christian slaveholders hold their slaves for these *benevolent ends*, and not for *their own gain*. Shew us that they repudiate, for their own benefit, these wages of sin, and the crimson garments of slavery become whiter than snow.

You complain much of the bitter language of abolitionists towards slaveholders, and I freely admit you have reason to complain. But you do not consider how hard it is to use soft words, when dealing with giant sins. Kindness and love may kindle language into a most vehement flame, when directed against sin, and your own eloquent and impressive sermons are not wanting in the language of terror, which is yet, I doubt not, the language of love.

You bring up President Edwards as a slaveholder, and you might have added the name of the honored and excellent Samuel Davies, than whom a brighter star never shone in this western sky. But what does all this prove? Only that good men in dark ages are apt to imitate the sins of the times. Calvin's views of religious toleration would be criminal in these days—they were so then, but in less degree. And all these matters may be answered in this one Scripture passage:—

“The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”

And this, in truth, is the only ground on which slavery can be palliated. It is certain that good men, as they enter upon the active duties of life, find many evils, which they would gladly remove, *as evils*, but they do not suddenly reach the conviction that these evils are moral obliquities, actual sins, and that they are bound to oppose them as such. This well known fact, apologises for, while it does not justify the persecution of the Quakers in New England, the execution of supposed witches, and other sins, which our Puritan fathers were too slow to discover and abandon. Yet it must be admitted, that the plea of neglect or ignorance, where the means of knowledge are possessed, is not satisfactory, and a truly

pious man will not be likely to satisfy himself in this way—under a consciousness of newly discovered sin, he will humble himself before God, and fly to the blood of cleansing, as his only hope of forgiveness. Such was the conduct of Paul; he verily thought he did God service when he persecuted the church; but when the law of God entered his conscience, he acknowledged himself the chief of sinners.

In your third letter, you dwell much upon the unfairness of abolitionists, in their representations of the treatment of slaves. Doubtless many cases of cruelty have been overstated, it is equally certain that many more have never been told; circumstances are not favorable for the developement of these cases. I think you are mistaken in the assertion, that if one murders a single slave, the fact is published throughout the country. I have reason to believe that the awful secrets of many a plantation are not revealed to the public eye. The sands of Carolina and the soil of Missouri have alike been wet with innocent blood, which once nerved the arm of the helpless sufferer to toil night and day for a thankless and inhuman master. The testimony of the slaves themselves cannot be had; they dare not complain; and the plantations of the South are seldom trodden by the feet of Northern freemen, save only those who travel for pleasure or gain, and their brief stay in the pleasant home of the master, is but too apt to give them a "South side view of slavery." Yet in spite of all these hindrances, the cry of the oppressed, the groans of murdered innocence, are sometimes heard, and often enough too to assure us, that in very many cases, nothing but the cupidity of the master stands between him and the death of his slave, and that passion and cruelty will oft times triumph even over avarice, and the voice of his brother's blood will cry unto God from the ground. Masters and overseers will not report the death of their slaves, when occasioned by cruelty or neglect—the survivors dare not, and other witnesses there are none.

I must tell you, dear Sir, that the cause of the irritation of the Southern mind, is not the violent language of the abolitionists, which I admit has often been unwise and unkind,

for conscious innocence is not so easily irritated. It lies deeper, far deeper, even in that solemn sanctuary, where awful thoughts hurry to and fro in the midnight hour, where the unwelcome light penetrates into regions where darkness is loved, because the sinner's deeds are evil. Yes, Sir, the conscience of the slaveholder is not at rest. *Your own is not at rest*, while you defend an institution, which you seem to think is sustained by a just God. All along your pages its sad apprehensions are visible. Its struggles with the truth are painfully evident, and the distressing warfare agitates your own soul, as you contemplate the duty of the "watchman," and the solemn reckonings of the Judgment day. With all your mistakes and errors, I believe you will stand among the justified at last, by a Redeemer's righteousness, but if there could be grief in heaven, the memory of what you have done for slavery, would make you weep in the presence of angels and the spirits of the just made perfect.

But will the Southern churches hear us, if we come in the language of Christian love and with the meekness of the gospel, to point out the sin of slavery. Fidelity is equally important as love, nay it is a branch of that tree of life. May we come then with all sincerity and kindness to remonstrate with you on this momentous subject? Will you exercise the virtues of patience and forbearance while we attempt to reason with you in the spirit of love? On this point we confess we have no hope. You will not hear us; the language of denunciation from the South is louder and fiercer than the remonstrances of the North. *You* may come and defend your institutions in our cities and villages with no opposition; but the moment *we* stand on Southern ground, to proclaim the sin of slavery, we are driven with violence from your midst, or confined in your prisons to die. Slavery is the law of violence; it will not listen to the voice of love; it hides itself from the light; it cannot bear the voice of reproof. Its hospitality to ministers who apologize for it is ample and large—to its faithful reprovcr, it offers imprisonment, or exile.

You quote the case of Rev. Dr. Adams, as proof that abolitionists are not willing to hear the truth as to the treatment of slaves. The reason is simply this. Dr. Adams believes slavery to be right; he justifies it from the Bible; his testimony therefore is not satisfactory; he is not an impartial witness. Moreover, he could not, in his brief sojourn at the South, become acquainted with the general treatment of slaves on the plantations; he saw them in the cities and families of the South, where its form is milder and its aspects far less forbidding. But enough is known of Dr. Adams' prejudices and pro-slavery feelings, to weaken his testimony and diminish its influence on Northern minds. Besides this, many masters, naturally kind and humane, do not themselves know how their slaves are treated; the business is in the hands of overseers, and the bloody discipline of slavery is kept out of sight. The hospitality of the master's mansion and the cold comforts of the negro's cabin are not often seen in contrast. The one is an experience which too often blinds the eye—the other an object not likely to afford pleasure. I suppose if any one should write as able a defence of the abolitionists at the South, he would have found worse treatment from Southern *meekness and love*, than Dr. Adams did from Northern *fanaticism and infidelity*. He would probably have been driven with violence from the regions of slavery.

Do you believe, dear Sir, that the spirit of the South towards abolitionists is any kinder or better than theirs towards the South? Have you no words of severity for them? Must all the reproach fall on one side? Are not the bitter epithets employed by the South, coupled with the violence inflicted on the persons of abolitionists, a match for the opprobrious language, but unrevenging opposition of the North. Southern men may travel freely and fearlessly all over the North, and say what they please. The graves of martyred abolitionists, the lynch law inflicted on the peaceful preacher, who spoke kind words for the slave, are fatal demonstrations, that "Justice has fallen in your streets and equity cannot enter."

And even your own pages, written mainly in a Christian spirit, are at times deformed by the bitter language which you denounce in abolitionists. You speak of Mr. Garrison as a "blaspheming infidel." I have no sympathy with the religious views of this gentleman; I dissent entirely from most of his doctrines; and he has betrayed and injured the sacred cause he pleads, by his wild notions of church organizations, civil polity and woman's rights; but Mr. Garrison is not an infidel, unless you will involve in the charge, the respectable sect of Quakers, whose religious views he adopts. Mr. Garrison was never, to my knowledge, known to blaspheme. If there is aught of infidelity in his character, which I do not believe, it is the pro-slavery tendencies of the church which has produced it. Nevertheless such words from you are unseemly, and I rejoice that they are rare exceptions to your usually cautious and dignified style.

But I must pause. Gladly would I leave the subject forever. But it may not be. The church I love has retrograded on this all-important subject;\* her position is unworthy of her holy profession and her christian aims. She must free herself from these shackles; she must not be enslaved to slavery; her holy doctrines, her enlightened polity, her blessed influences, must be divorced from this accursed institution. We cry to God for her deliverance; we firmly believe it will come. In the spirit of christian love, we will do all in our power to hasten it.

Most sincerely yours,

SMECTYMNUUS.

\* The following is the language of Dr. R. I. Breckenridge, in 1834:—

"I do believe and have long and repeatedly maintained, that slavery is a *sin* to him who in any way supports it. In 1833 I did refuse to sit as a corresponding member of the Synod of Kentucky, after that body refused to say that God's law condemned slavery. To put an end to slavery, we are all bound to use legal means where they exist, and *moral means always.*"

Dr. Breckenridge is high authority among Presbyterians, and though foiled in his benevolent purposes, he represented the views of many Presbyterian ministers, who at that time were not afraid to speak out on this subject.



## LETTERS TO REV. N. L. RICE, D. D.

---

### SECOND LETTER.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—

It was my complaint that you would not pronounce of slavery that it was a sin against God; but in your fourth letter you take up the so called Bible argument in such form, as leaves us no doubt, that in your view, the system is lawful, and that its abuses only are sinful. You tell us that the Bible “condemns all robbery, oppression and cruelty, and tolerates slavery.” I shall leave you to unriddle this paradox, when you can prove that compulsory servitude is neither robbery, oppression or cruelty—in other words, that to rob a man of his liberty, without crime, *is not robbery*; to compel him to labor for your benefit, *is not oppression*; to *sell his wife and children, is not cruelty*. You may construct a better argument for polygamy from the Bible, than you have found for slavery, for polygamy was tolerated without the checks imposed upon slavery. If you should be so unhappy as to convince any who read your pages that the Bible really does make it a righteous thing, and allows its practice among Christians, and therefore they infer that it cannot be from God, your nice distinctions between slavery and injustice, will have led that soul to a ruin, for which you are justly and awfully responsible.

It is true that God permitted servitude among his people, but it was a widely different thing from Southern slavery. It is true that God permitted and commanded his people to

destroy the heathen; but this is no rule for us, but had its special purpose in the orderings of his providence. It is true that Onesimus was sent back to Philemon, but as a brother beloved and not as a servant. It was a kind, yet pungent rebuke to Philemon, who in the first dawnings of grace, had not discovered the injustice of Roman slavery, and who was now under apostolic injunction to treat Onesimus, no longer as a servant, but as a christian brother. We have reason to believe that Philemon was convinced of the injustice of slavery, and that he liberated Onesimus, who was employed with Tychicus in conveying the letter of Paul to the Colossians.

But you will not feel the force of the Bible commands, to wrong no man, to love our brother and even our enemies, to relieve the hungry, to deliver the oppressed and release the captive, until you believe it wrong for man to enslave his fellow man. Alas, the sad delusion, "the wild and guilty fancy, that man may hold property in his fellow man." It is this which closes and bars the soul against the light of truth. Your own virtuous and intelligent mind is inaccessible on this subject to the most convincing arguments. But this shall not hinder my charity, for I remember with shame how slowly those bars were removed from my own mind. I remember, we are sanctified but in part, and unholy prejudices may blind us for a time to the clearest light, and close our hearts to the pulsations of christian love.

You tell us, in the close of your fourth letter, that the "Presbyterian Church has refused to pervert God's word, to make it either denounce or sanction slavery." You are aware, however, that numbers within her pale, both ministers and laymen, feel that she is in a false position. Her robes are soiled and her march is heavy and dreary over this accursed and enchanted ground, but like her elder sister of Scotland, she will be disenthralled—she will yet triumph over this inveterate foe to her prosperity and peace. She will proclaim an allegiance to God, which stretches beyond and walks over the sinful statutes of men. She will confess her sins, and return to the Lord, and her mission of love and salvation,

shall break the bonds of the oppressor and let the oppressed go free.

I am unwilling to answer your fifth letter. If it had more truth and less sophistry—more grief and less sarcasm—more solicitude for the slave and less for the master; if it sounded the gospel trumpet more, and the Southern trumpet less, I should meet your argument with better feeling and with stronger hope of its kindness and sincerity. The amount of your letter is, that you invite us to come and preach among you the gospel, as we understand it in its bearings on slavery; but you have not given us the friendly warning, “Beware of spring-guns, man-traps are set here.” I know of no command to covet or pursue the crown of martyrdom. “If they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another,” was the direction of our Lord. It may be our duty to face the consequences of preaching the truth, or it may not be. Perhaps it might be well for you to set us the example, for it cannot be doubted, that many Southern ministers would be glad to preach against slavery, if they dared. I am not sure that you would not be glad to utter some bitter things against it, if the risk was not too great. For myself, I should have deemed myself safer in preaching the gospel, as we understand it, in Pagan Rome, in the days of the Antonines, than in Charleston or Savannah. When the South is willing to hear that branch of the gospel which proclaims liberty to the captive, it will be time enough for you to invite us to this field of labor.

In your sixth letter, you have another brief commentary on the difficulty of emancipating slaves, founded on the question, Where shall we place them? In this connection you bring up again the blessings of colonization, and tell us that abolitionists have attempted to shut the door upon this method of emancipation; and so they have, for the door is so small, that the long and ever multiplying procession of slaves would never get through it. Colonization is excellent for certain ends it proposes, but as a means of extinction to slavery, it has no value at all. You must first *destroy the market* for slaves, if you would drive slavery out of the world.

You must "hew down the tree, cut off its branches, shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit," if you would withdraw its deadly night-shade from your civil, religious and social institutions. But this letter is mainly a repetition of what you have said before, and it needs no farther remark.

Your next letter refers to the efforts which may be made to secure freedom to the slave. You mention three, viz: Moral suasion, Stratagem, and Political action. The first you approve as consistent with the gospel—the two latter you condemn. Moral suasion we cannot use, for you will not let us come, or send tracts or books on the subject. Stratagem is the necessity of the slave, and if you were enslaved or in prison wrongfully, you would probably think it lawful to escape even as Paul did, by being let down by a basket over the wall. The Christians of Damascus, finding moral suasion of no use, against rigorous penal statutes, had no scruple in employing strategy, and the apostle himself was, no doubt, very glad to escape in this way. He did not expect a miracle to be performed, and made use of such means as he knew belonged to his natural rights; and in justifying this mode of proceeding, as you probably would, you justify the slave who attempts to secure his own rights in the same way. Political action you deprecate as arraying the North against the South, and tending to disunion. Let us suppose, for a moment, that the long threatened measures of the South were adopted, and the Union was peaceably dissolved. In such case, the free States would not consent to retain a single slave State, as it would completely mar their confederacy—nor would the South consent to retain any but slave States. Let us now look at the probable consequences. Maryland and Virginia, on the east, would be border territory. Tennessee and Kentucky would make the south-western border. It would of course be impossible for these States to keep their slaves securely in the vicinity of free States, over which no Fugitive Slave Law could in that case operate. Consequently the value of slaves would decline, and the ultimate effect would be emancipation. It would be a political necessity. This would push slavery

farther South,—where again the border States would feel the insecurity of their slaves, and the same causes would weaken or overthrow it there—and thus, from very necessity, slavery would find its grave at home. The South have desired dissolution—the North has always opposed it; but a change is coming over us. If the South persists in her claim for the Fugitive Slave Law, and for the addition of other slave States,—the North will grant her desire, and give her a peaceable dismission from the confederacy; but the moment this is done, she must get ready for the exit of slavery—it will follow as certainly as morning succeeds to night. It shall be overruled for good. Her lands will advance in value and be covered with a new population; her wealth and her glory will increase—for the institution of slavery, abhorred by God and man, shall no longer darken her sun-light or paralyze her energies.

It is pleasant to read what you say of the Fugitive Slave Law. It is the outburst of an honest and generous feeling. I am a friend to law and order, and I would quietly take the penalty of performing a christian duty in violation of this unholy statute, for obedience to it is out of the question—it is a monstrous deformity, which cannot stand, and must be crushed under the weight of its own sins.

I am sorry to find you opposed to the doctrine of the non-extension of slavery. You are willing it should be extended, in the strange belief, that the difficulty of removing it, will be lessened. All experience is against you here. The more it extends, the larger will be its demands. It has always been aggressive. But in one view you are right—its last aggressions—i. e. the Fugitive Slave Law—and the repeal of the Missouri compromise will be its death. It is an old maxim, “Whom the gods mean to destroy, they first infatuate.”

In your eighth letter, we abolitionists come in for a signal share of reproach. We “have hindered the cause of emancipation, done injury to religion and to our country.” These are grave charges, and ought to be sustained by irrefragable proof. It is fit here, that I should remind you, that Mr. Gar-

rison's party is too small\*—its principles are too repellant to exert any considerable influence. Its platform is so broad, that it takes in every discontented, unhappy ranter, who may be opposed to human enactments, or who may go for radical measures in any or every department of society. Its force is greatly weakened by its appendages of woman's rights, the overthrow of the church, and the destruction of civil government. But behind all this fanaticism, there is a calm and steady anti-slavery sentiment, unshackled by Mr. Garrison's appendages, which is finding its way into every man's conscience. It disregards the false cry of disunion; it heeds not the murmur of politicians, the alarm of statesmen, nor the terrors of the slaveholder. It is pressing into the high places of power; it is arming the North and West, with an energy, before which nothing of slavery can stand, and behind which, when it has passed over the land, nothing will remain. It has enlisted the public conscience; it enters the public prayer; it pervades the church. Its march is onward, and whoever will stop its advancing wheels will be crushed to powder. The South has pulled down the vengeance upon her own head. She challenged the North to a contest,—and from her lakes and rivers, from the far West to the farthest East, her marshalled hosts are pressing on for conflict. The grand arena is the halls of Congress. Compromise and policy and craft have done their work. The issue is now on its own merits. The question is Freedom or Slavery, and its momentous results, the future alone can reveal.

In your ninth letter you propose to defend the Presbyterian Church against the charges of abolitionists. I have not the least doubt, that she has done much to alleviate the condition of slaves, by infusing the softening influences of the gospel into the bitter cup of slavery. Let her have credit for

\* I have elsewhere alluded to Mr. Garrison's influence as being very considerable, but this influence must rather be spoken of in relation to his pioneer position and before he connected his no-government theories with the cause of Emancipation. He has done much to arouse the public mind, but he has had no skill in directing public sentiment, and by his gross mistakes has retarded and injured the cause of the slave. In his private character, he is unexceptionable; in his intercourse with men, his temper is mild and amiable, and no reasonable person will refuse him credit for ability and energy in defending his positions.

all. I rejoice in whatever elevates her position and sanctifies her influence in the world. But she, in common with the other branches of the church, has stopped far short of her duty. She has left undone what she ought to have done. It is in vain to lop off excrescences here and there, so long as the accursed tree is left in its full vigor and strength. You say truly that freedom is no great blessing to the ignorant and vicious; but that they should be kept ignorant, is the dreadful necessity of the system. Slavery must shut up the book of knowledge; it must degrade its victims, in order to fit them for the condition of slaves. They must not learn their own rights. It is one of the atrocities of slavery, that it must darken the mind, blunt the sensibilities, and pervert the conscience of the slave. It does indeed permit the gospel to be preached with certain limitations; but it avails itself of the gospel's hold on the conscience, to inculcate the duty of submission—the obligations of the slaves, and the wickedness of disobeying masters. The other side of the picture never comes into view, only as it is seen by the light of the cross and the love of the Redeemer; and many a trembling fugitive has been guided by this light, not only to the consolations of religion, but to the peaceful enjoyment of his rights in a land of freedom. We may not boast of what our church has done for slaves, when we consider what she has refused to do.

You speak of the share which other denominations have had in the work of converting the slaves. In Georgia alone, we are told there are 14,000 colored members in the Baptist churches. I would not depreciate the good of this, but I find that in 1851 there were 422 churches of the Hard Shell Baptists in Georgia, comprising about one fourth of all in the country. If they are members of these Antinomian churches, whose lax morality is proverbial, it will not be contended that they have gained much by this kind of religion. Nor does my observation of the influence of Methodism, in its Arminian doctrines, its violent impulses of animal feeling, its tempests of passion, its wild and unaccountable and unintelligent extasies, inspire much confidence in the real conver-

sion of the great mass of its professors; nor do I believe that you place much reliance upon the fruits of its revivals. Methodism does not discriminate; it fills many minds with its raptures; but the revival dies. Temptation comes with its blasts, and the forest which was lovely in its green, and beautiful in its promise, has fallen like grass under the scythe of the mower. Some indeed survive, and many a blessed influence has gone forth from this denomination; but my estimate of the value of Methodist instruction has been greatly modified by what I have seen of its fruits, and I am grieved to say, that many a poor slave who is wild with delight, in their revivals, gives most painful evidence, that his religion is unfruitful in his daily life. It is the stony ground seed, which has no root in itself, and speedily withers away. Let me not be understood to lessen the value of religious instruction as imparted to the slaves. Many, very many among them embrace the gospel in sincerity and truth and under the ministry of all evangelical denominations; but how much greater would be this influence, were it not for the vast subtractions, which the compulsory ignorance and debasing influences and bad examples of slavery, will of necessity make, both in the number and character of these supposed conversions.

And in fidelity, I must here add, that many Presbyterian families, professedly pious, take little or no pains for the religious instruction of their slaves. Instances are known, on large plantations, where Presbyterian masters, in full communion with the church, are cruel and remorseless in their treatment of their slaves. Dr. Adams might go to the mansion of the master, and tell us of their piety; but facts have broken through the awful ramparts of slavery, nay through the hedges of pro-slavery Presbyterian churches, which ought to have consigned the guilty oppressor to his grave, while yet that oppressor walks before men in the garb of sanctity, and finds no reproof or complaint from his pro-slavery minister or brethren.

I am aware that our church has enjoined it upon church sessions, to discountenance and prevent all cruelty in the



treatment of slaves; but I am ignorant of any action in this matter, which has to any extent met the requirements or suggestions of the General Assembly. Here and there, a case so flagrant has occurred, that it would be intolerable to pass it over, and censures have been pronounced; but the organic evil protects itself against remedy, by its inherent strength. The mass of the community at the South being infected with it, will overlook its abuses, and they who might wish to prevent cruelty, are themselves prevented by their fear of others, as well as by their own interests.

And now, my dear Sir, are you willing to look your Congregational brethren in the face; will you tell them, in one breath, that you will not pronounce of slavery whether it is right or wrong? In your next, will you defend it from the Bible? In the next, will you speak of it as a great evil, and boast that you have done much to remove it? And now what will you do next? With the conflicting and ever varying views of slavery, which mark your pages, how will you conduct the argument? With no stand-point, but the shifting, and I may add shiftless positions to which you are alternately driven, in what direction will you apply your reasonings? To a mind like yours, accustomed to direct and systematic argument, the struggle is great indeed. Among the shallows and quicksands of slavery you are tossed about, like a ship without compass or rudder. The defect is not in your mind, but in your subject. Your Congregational brethren look upon your struggles in the net of slavery, as of one whose strength, great as it is, is overtaken by the green withs and the new cords, which are thrown around you, as you grapple in the unequal conflict. Struggle on a little longer, and when the strife of intellect is over, the warm love of that gospel, which burns in your heart, will teach you the wrong of the slave, and enlist your talents in a cause worthy their noblest exercise.

In your closing letter, you refer to the number of free colored people in the slaveholding States, and you account for the large proportion of such, by voluntary emancipation in the Southern States. If your conclusion is correct, it is in-

deed a most encouraging sign of progress in the Southern conscience. It proves that truth is rapidly penetrating the minds of our brethren, and is an evidence that conscience is often stronger than mere pecuniary interest. I confess myself highly gratified with the statement, and though I account for a part of it, by the natural increase of the free population, yet your conclusion is not in the main unwarrantable. And in this connection, I would hope that our own church has been instrumental in this great result. I believe her noble principles of religious liberty will force their way over civil restraints which are not warranted by the Bible.

But in the midst of this cheering view, we are met by the startling fact, that slaves have multiplied in far greater proportion. This is a statement not to be disputed, and it calls upon us now, both in Church and State, to arrest the tremendous evil. It is your opinion, that abolitionists have done little towards hastening the freedom of the slave; but the flood of light they have poured upon the Southern mind, is beginning to shew itself in most encouraging forms. Republican meetings are held in Virginia; nay these principles are seconded by warm applause, and the Virginians now see the mighty tide of immigrants, which but for slavery would fill the Old Dominion with beauty and riches and honor, passing far to the West, without casting one "longing, lingering look behind." In Kentucky the voice of freedom is heralding the progress of nobler principles, and the glad hope of the extinction of slavery, is animating thousands of hearts, and finds utterance in many voices. Yes Sir, these principles of abolition, hated and despised as they may be, are yet honored and cherished in many a Southern heart, which as yet dares not give them expression. All the mighty interests of the nation are dwindling into insignificance by the side of this great Question, which is now divested of all compromise and trick and art, and stands naked before the nation, demanding its tremendous solution. Slavery has overreached herself. She silenced the Southern press and the Southern church. She appealed to the cupidity of the North, and obtained the hated Fugitive Slave Law. And

here her conquests end. She has reached the zenith of her power, and to-day the shades are lengthening on the circle of her dial. God and man are united for her overthrow. Her monstrous assumptions, her unmitigated absurdities, her lying pretensions, are seen in a sunlight which knows no setting. The church is cutting loose from the fangs of this deadly serpent. Every minister of Christ, who loves his God, his Bible, his race, or his own character, will cast off from its fatal embrace. God grant, my dear Sir, that your next endeavor may be in behalf of the oppressed, and when your setting sun shall be darkened in the shades of death, may your dying eye be illumined by visions of that free, happy land, "Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

Most sincerely yours,

SMECTYMNUUS.



## LETTER TO REV. NEHEMIAH ADAMS, D. D.

---

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—

I have seen many books and pamphlets which may justly be termed *Pleas for the Slave*, but never, till I read your book entitled “A South Side View of Slavery,” did I see one that so well deserved the title, “*A Plea for Slavery.*” I have read Dr. Thornwell, Dr. Rice, and other Southern ministers, who have softened the aspect of this evil, as much as possible, but I have never seen or heard of a writer before, who discovered so much of the utility and so many of the blessings of slavery, as have been displayed in your book. Indeed, you have presented us with scenes so pleasant and attractive, that we would fain linger on this enchanted ground, and feel its refreshing breezes, and cull its beautiful amaranths, that we may be strengthened to encounter the sad realities of slavery, when the lovely, but illusive visions are dispelled. Indeed you have done what you could, unconsciously I would hope, to rivet the fetters of the slave—to hush the misplaced philanthropy which would restore to him his rights, and invest him with the ornaments and dignities of a moral and immortal being. You would leave his destiny in the hands of his absolute master. No idea that he is wronged must enter his mind; he must have no knowledge of his rights, no permission, or ability to study the word of God; no interest but his master’s; no desire, or endeavor to escape from bondage. He must be contented and submissive, though deprived of those blessings *which to*

*you are dearer than life*, and to which, his right is as *good as yours*. Even the cruelties of slavery are imaginary—a sale at the auction-block, so terrible to sensitive nerves, is a blessing in disguise. Indeed the compensations of slavery are such, that all abstract notions of right and wrong must be exploded. “You cannot but look at the South as the appointed protector of this feeble member of the human family,” and “such have been the marvellous acts of divine grace to the Africans, that it requires neither strong faith, nor fancy, to suppose that this work might still go on, *in the form of interchange of the blacks between Africa and the Southern States*,” and “as sure as Christ is to reign through the earth, the Christians at the South will vindicate themselves as the benefactors of the colored race.” “While we are sure to hear of distressing cruelties, ten thousand acts of kindness are not mentioned.” “Religion in the masters destroys every thing in slavery, which makes it obnoxious, and converts the relation of the slave into an effectual means of happiness.”

And the Bible, too, is the friend of slavery. That holy Book, which declares “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” “teaches clearly that the relation is not sinful,” and “slavery itself is no where assailed,” in its sacred pages. Paul did not act with the maxim, that “the apostles girdled slavery and left it to die,” “he did not quietly pass his axe round the sins of his day,” and yet “slavery is no where assailed.” “Was he therefore a pro-slavery man. Not he. Would he have spoken against the system of American slavery had he lived in our day? Surely he would against its evils and abuses and sins, *but not against the relation of master and slave.*”\*

Is this sketch of your book, dear Sir, in any-wise untrue? Have you not made discoveries of righteousness and goodness in slavery, till now unattained, by the keenest optics of Northern or Southern men? You have celebrated these blessings in a book whose second and third editions testify

\* These quotations are from the “South Side View.”

the value of your contributions to the cause of slavery. You have ascended to heights in the stupendous illusions of slavery, which the eagle wings of Thornwell and Rice have never explored. Its blessings are immortal—its evils and abuses almost too insignificant to be named.

It would seem impossible that any one could expect that such a book should be refuted by sober argument. A deformity so monstrous, issuing from a pen, whose delightful utterances on the divine themes of christian faith and hope, have cheered many a desponding heart, is a contrast so sad, that we would gladly treat it as the dream of the maniac; but your character and your position, require us to deal with you as a man, sober and intelligent, miserably deluded it may be, yet still responsible and sincere.

I therefore take from your book the following positions, by which you seek to justify slavery; and the whole drift of your statements, your arguments and your personal observation go to sustain them.

1st. American slavery, as a whole, is a system of blessings to the African race.

2d. The relation of master and slave, as it exists in this country or elsewhere, is in no wise sinful, though abuses and sins and those of an aggravated character may grow out of it.

3d. The Bible sustains the system of slavery, and the doctrine of the right of property in man, is distinctly revealed.

4th. American slavery is practically the mildest form of involuntary servitude, though it has as rigid a code as any; and this is owing to the kind influences of the gospel, which in religious men destroys every thing in slavery which is obnoxious.

I have placed these points nearly in the order in which they appear in your book.

First. Slavery, on the whole, is a system of blessings to the African race.

And what if it be so? Does this justify the accursed system? Does it vindicate the slaveholder, that some inci-

dental blessings are mingled in the bitter cup of the slave. The fires of Smithfield were of eminent service to the cause of Christ, but does this obliterate one line of that damning guilt which rests upon the memory of Bishops Gardiner and Bonner and their bigoted mistress, Queen Mary? Not at all. No more do the blessings of the gospel, which are found by the slave, redeem his master from the villany of robbing that slave of his civil and social rights, and appropriating his labor to his own benefit. Your position has nothing to do with the moral character of slavery. Let it be proved, and it is nothing to the purpose. Your business is with the system, not as compared with Africa in heathenism, but in relation to the known obligations of justice and equity—and it is to the same standard of obligation to which you hold your fellow men, that I bring the slaveholder for trial and conviction. It is manifest to the most careless observer, that no credit is due to the slaveholder, because God has ordained that good may be realized by the slave in the overrulings of his Providence.

But your position in itself is, after all, more than doubtful. Christianity would of course penetrate Africa, more or less, through missionary operations, and it would go unfettered by the shameful clogs which slavery has thrown around it. It would gain a striking advantage by this freedom, and be a blessing indeed to that hapless race, who are now the victims of oppression. Neither have you estimated the loss which slavery inflicts on Christianity—the hindrances to missions, the infidelity, the paralysis of effort, which have grown out of it, and which retards the conversion of Africa. How much does the slave-holding South do for African missions? The Southern churches well know, that if the light of the gospel, unfettered by slavery, should penetrate Africa, it would strike a fatal blow at the institution, and put its nameless curses out of the catalogue of blessings.

But there is another view of these peculiar blessings of slavery. One fourth of the slaves embarked for America have perished in the horrors of the middle passage—the remainder have been consigned to bondage, and are now per-



petuating and multiplying a race of slaves. Had they remained in Africa in a savage state, it is manifest that the population would have been restricted nearly to the limits it has had for ages—so that slavery has consigned millions to bondage and wretchedness, who but for this, would never have cursed the day of their birth. What though it be Providential, as every thing is in this world, even to our smallest affairs? This is not the light in which we are to read our duty. The hieroglyphics of Providence are to be decyphered only by faith and God's word. The mighty overrulings of God stand infinitely above the obligations and duties of men. To all human appearance, the advocacy of slavery dooms the African race to everlasting bondage; it invites and encourages the slave traffic; and yet God may order it otherwise, and the richest blessings may come from the most abominable crimes. But man shall be judged by his own acts, and not by the good or ill results which may spring from them.

But your second position declares that the relation of master and slave is in no wise sinful, though abuses and sins, and those of an aggravated character, may grow out of it.

Here you separate the tree and its fruit. The tree is good, but the fruit may or may not be good. Men may gather grapes or thorns from the same tree; it needs no engrafting of piety, for it is good in itself; yet it may be improved by this process, for "Religion," you tell us, "destroys every thing in slavery which is obnoxious." Your position is simply absurd, and it needs no argument to make this fact obvious to your readers.

But I will not detain you, or my readers, on this point. I come at once to the sins and abuses, which you say may grow out of the system. I ask you, then, what these abuses are? Is it an *abuse* of slavery, to rob a man of his liberty, his time, his labor, his opportunities of improvement, his social and domestic rights, the privilege of reading the Bible, and other blessings, which he loses by his condition of bondage? These surely are no abuses—they are the *very thing, slavery itself*. Take them away, and bondage ceases. You will not contend that the mass of the best slaveholders con-

sider these things as abuses. They are the necessary incidents of slavery; and if these are right, the system is right— if these are wrong, slavery is wrong. Now, dear Sir, are you deluded by the miserable fallacy, that slavery is *right*, and its *necessary accompaniments are wrong*? It has no existence without these appendages. What distinctions will the sharpest discrimination make here? What microscopic enchantment has presented to you, in sensible lines, that which is indivisible? If you assert of these deprivations, that they are just, then slavery is just, for it cannot exist a moment without them; if you admit they are wrong, then slavery is wrong, for these are the things that make the system of bondage—without them, it is but a shadow, nay an absolute nonentity.

But let us examine its abuses. 1st. The use of the lash. I suppose you would limit this abuse—possibly you may think it a necessary and healthful discipline; it is only an abuse perhaps, when it becomes violent and cruel, and then you will say it is sinful. But let me tell you that every stroke of the whip upon the hapless slave, is cruelty and injustice, for his is a *compulsory* service—he has a right to decline it, but he dares not. That which is wrong in the outset, becomes doubly wrong, when enforced by violence. Do I need to tell you, that in families reputed pious, large benefactors to religious societies and high in religious profession, the lash is not only essential to the field slave, but is freely used in these families, and is deemed a necessary article of kitchen furniture? Such is the literal fact. Yes, in these households of prayer, households to question whose piety, would be, in your view, the extreme of bigotry, this fact is not only seen, but when the slaves are sullen or supposed to be so, they are often forced into a position, which may yield some pretence for severe punishment, that the evil spirit may be expelled, and the other slaves preserved from the contagion. But I forget myself. “Religion in the masters destroys every thing in slavery which is obnoxious, and not only so, it converts the relation of the slave into an effectual means of happiness.”

But let us look at its harsher abuses. We will take, secondly, the auction-block. When I reached this point in your

“South Side View,” I began to expect some fairness in your statements—some condemnation proportioned to the outrage committed upon human rights; but I was out of measure astonished to find what a rich blessing was contained in this seeming cruelty. What an unspeakable relief must it give to a generous heart, to think that the 183 slaves belonging to the estate of a deceased slaveholder, who were recently sold at auction for more than \$100,000, were probably receiving a rich blessing. Away with that false philanthropy which imagines any evil in the moderate use of the whip, or the necessary and useful separations of the slaves. No matter what cries and tears and woes cluster round the desolate negro, he will soon find the rich blessings of his new condition; his sufferings are a delusion, nay a positive blessing.

A few years ago, a Northern gentleman ascended James River on his way to Richmond. On board the steamer was a company of slaves, bound for the Richmond market. Among the rest was a mother and her eight children. You will not sell this family separately, said he to the overseer. Oh no, was the reply, we shall provide against that. The conversation here dropped. A few days after, this same gentleman stepped into the slave-market at Richmond, from motives of curiosity. An auction had just been held, and the purchasers were removing their slaves. On a lowly bench sat the broken-hearted and despairing mother; her eight children had been sold, and the awful and eternal separation had been made—helpless and disconsolate, moveless as a statue, the picture of despair—she presented an image of unutterable woe, which left its indelible features on the mind of the beholder. But I forget myself again. These are blessings in disguise—happy mother!! blessed orphans!! you are rich sharers in the gifts and blessings of slavery.

I have said little or nothing of the slave-dealer. In your view, I see not how he can be guilty of crime, for buying and selling, so far as your observation went, was a blessing. If slavery is fruitful of good, he is the agent (not criminal surely) of its diffusion. He may take rich comfort from your view of the auction-block—it is a precious opiate to his conscience—

you have guided him to sources of consolation in his infamous traffic, of which perhaps he never dreamed. But I must pause. My heart sickens, as my eye goes over those pages, which were penned by the hand of one, whose sacred office is to bind up the broken hearted, to be a refuge for the oppressed and a shield for the defenceless. Surely, dear Sir, you have not threaded the labyrinths and mysteries of slavery—into its dark depths, hidden from human observation, your eye has not penetrated—had it been so, your book would have never seen the light.

Your third position is that the Bible sustains the system of slavery, and in it the doctrine of the right of property in man is distinctly revealed. In this statement all the declarations of God against injustice, fraud, oppression, and robbery of the poor, are in your view of no force against slavery. You hold that its permission, under certain circumstances, make it warrantable and justifiable now. You believe, with Dr. Rice, that the Bible condemns all these iniquities, but tolerates slavery. You imagine that because Paul did not condemn slavery itself, while he condemned every thing that belongs to it, he was tolerant of the system. As well might you plead, that because he did not condemn the barbarous sports of the Roman theatre, it was lawful for Christians to amuse themselves in this way. Paul was not ignorant that the gospel was pointed against all iniquity, and there were multitudes of sins which were *not* specially condemned by him, which were so obviously wrong, that no precept was necessary respecting them. So of slavery—*every one* of its accompaniments he condemned in most positive terms, and the thing itself disappears when these are gone. Did he then justify or tolerate slavery? As well might you say it was lawful for the Christian to worship in the temples of Venus and Apollo, because there was no express prohibition of these divinities. The idolatry forbidden by the Bible, was not more truly *inherent* in the worship of these false gods, than the injustice and fraud forbidden in the Scriptures are *inherent* in slavery.

I might here ask you a question, which is not only pertinent, but may be used as a test for the trial of your position.

Has the slave a right to leave his master? Will he commit a sin, if, believing his master has no righteous claim for unrewarded services, he escapes from bondage to a land of freedom? Will you condemn his flight? He comes to your door and asks shelter from the officers of the law; will you give it to him?—or will you restore him to the blessings of slavery, and tell him he has no right to escape; that he is in better condition at home, and that the Bible tells him to obey his master and not escape from him. Perhaps the suppliant at your door is a feeble member of the body of Christ. What will you do with her? I can answer for you. The “South Side View” will vanish; the truth will shine upon you; human laws will not bar your door; the higher law will step in, and assert its claims, and you will give shelter and comfort to the outcast. But if true to the principles you have laid down, you will deliver the fugitive to the officer, and the officer will send her back to bondage, if indeed, she does not choose death, rather than life.

But I have already in my letters to Dr. Rice dwelt sufficiently on this argument. You may wrest the Scriptures and pervert them to the most unhallowed purposes—but the eternal finger of inspiration is fixedly pointed at every form of slavery. He who finds the approval of slavery in the Bible, found it first in his own heart, and was thus blinded by the deceitfulness of sin.

But, in the last place, you tell us that American slavery is practically the mildest form of involuntary servitude, and this is owing to the kind infusions of the gospel, which in “religious men destroys every thing in slavery which is obnoxious.”

It is probably true that the religious element in America has to some extent softened the aspects of slavery. But the wonder is that the Protestant religion of America, should have gained so slight a victory over the atrocities of papal nations. England and France have wiped the stain from their garments. Protestant England and Papal France. Yet it is a fact, that France, in the darkness of the Papacy, has discovered and performed her duty, while Protestant America in this point is involved in more than Papal darkness. The

signs of the times indicate that it will soon disappear from Catholic countries, while Protestant ministers and a Protestant Church, will be its only advocates in the civilized world.

But you add a sentence, I have often quoted, and it is this, "Religion in men destroys every thing in slavery which is obnoxious." Charity might hope that this was a careless and unconsidered expression, for surely its truth is impossible. Religion is slow in its victories over human prejudice and passion—it exists in hearts very imperfectly sanctified, and you claim for it a triumph which it has never achieved. In man's imperfect condition, this complete victory is impossible. Religion, in individual cases, has abolished slavery, confessed its enormity, and repaired its evils, as far as possible. But this degree of light has reached but few minds. Such is the force of habit, the love of property, the desire for influence and authority, that the views of numbers, who it might be hoped are in the main Christians, are too much clouded to perceive the injustice and wrong of slavery. It is our aim to diffuse the light of truth—to dispel these clouds, to enlighten the conscience, and vindicate the great principles of the Bible from unholy perversion. Religion will eventually destroy slavery, but it will not destroy all its evils while it exists—to do this, is to destroy the system itself. In this passage you have virtually declared that the slave-owner cannot be a Christian, for if religion in the master destroys all that is obnoxious in slavery, I know of no master who can by *any possibility* be a Christian.

And now, Sir, I turn from the positions you have taken to yourself. Is it too much to say you have strengthened the hands of the oppressor; you have gladdened the hearts of slaveholders; you have consoled the slave-dealer in his dreadful traffic; you have discouraged the efforts of anti-slavery men; you have saddened the heart of many a disciple of Christ; you have burdened their charity with a load, which is scarcely to be borne. We have seen in your devotional works, the most delightful illustrations of gospel truth, and we have lingered long over those sacred themes, which you have addressed with inimitable power to the heart; but

in the book we are considering, the beauty has faded and the glory has departed—the broken harmony of faith and practice, has come upon our ears with discordant and melancholy sound. The chilling winds have withered the flowers of paradise—you have tainted its celestial air, and we turn from the wasted and saddened scene, with weary minds and sickened hearts. Could you but know the strong revulsion which the antagonism of your books has created, you would wonder at your own delusions, as you now wonder at the supposed delusions of others. You have, in the matter before us, a high standard of christian doctrine, and a very low view of christian obligation.

I gladly subscribe to your views of religious truth—they are, in my view, the glory of the gospel. On a Saviour's atoning blood and perfect righteousness, we together rest our hopes for Time and Eternity. But widely divergent are our views of christian duty. Love to man is one of the best evidences of love to God. The christian system is divinely benevolent; it cannot veil in organic forms, the "exceeding sinfulness of sin." Did I not suppose, that the views of slavery you avow, are the effect of a STUPENDOUS DELUSION, my charity and my hope for you would sink together. But I remember the persecutions of Calvin, the mistakes of Luther, the errors of Fenelon, the contentions of Baxter and Owen, and I am satisfied that religion will no more conquer all the corruptions of the heart, than it will "destroy all that is obnoxious in slavery."

But a brighter day is dawning. The christian heart beats with new love to the down-trodden slave. The power of conscience is deeply felt in the public mind. The sin of slavery is forcing itself on the public eye. The church may lag behind, but the work will go on. Your book may stand in the way, but it will be like chaff before the wind. The brazen front of slavery is quailing before the mighty onset of truth. The millennial morning of Africa, comes on with the advancing glories of the Cross. For wise reasons, unknown to us, God has permitted this darkness, in regard to slavery, to settle down for ages upon the nations; but its sophistries

and delusions are fast passing away. He will use even your book to assist in the mighty work. It has done much to reveal the fallacies of slavery; it has stepped over the lines of policy, and its distorted and startling defence of injustice and violence, has led many to ask the character of that system, which requires such auxiliaries. But these blessings of your "South Side View," will no more vindicate *you* for writing it, than the incidental blessings of slavery will justify the *slave-dealer* in his dreadful traffic.

It was the misfortune of the late Mr. Webster, that he was not accessible to the truth. The sycophants who surrounded him, assured him of success in his ambitious views. It was his gross mistake, to view them as the representatives of public sentiment. Their voice to him was the voice of the nation. Southern influence was invoked in his behalf. The Constitution was interpreted for the Slave interest. The South was assured that its interests would be protected. Mr. Webster believed the South would be grateful—the North he imagined was already his own. The dream was suddenly broken, and with it the heart of the great statesman. The mortal eclipse of death passed over him, and his last public acts have stained forever the glory of his life. I say to you, Sir, be not deceived. The flatteries of the South are more fatal than the bite of a serpent; the approbation of partial friends and the silence of those who are aggrieved, do not represent the public estimate of your book. It has weakened your influence to an extent of which you have little conception. Many a heart has mourned for you and for the church which till now has been blessed by your labors. It is not too late to redeem yourself and your many virtues from the withering blight, which must otherwise attend you through life. The shadows of the evening will soon gather around you. Oh let not a life of eminent usefulness go down under this sad eclipse. Solemnly review what you have done, and may the grace of God help you to undo it, before it is too late.

Most sincerely yours,

SMECTYMNUUS.









LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 899 685 9

